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GIRL CHILD IN INDIA

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1. Children - Socio Welfare Aspects
2. Women - Social Role and Status

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Children constitute the nation's future human resource. Their growth, development, education, understanding and comprehension determine the future of any nation. Investment in child development is thus an investment in the country's future and in improving the nation's quality life. A child in many ways is one of the most class neutral categories, a category this is universally the recipient of love and affection. The Socio-economic condition of children is an important index of measuring the economic well being of any nation.

Referring to the child wealth of our country, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru once observed: "Somehow the fact that ultimately everything depends upon the human factor gets rather lost in our thinking of plan and schemes of national development in terms of factories, machines and general schemes. It is very well important that we must have them, but ultimately of course, it is the human being that counts and if the human being counts, well, he counts much more as a child than as a grown up." The Indian Constitution contains several provisions for protection, development and welfare of children. Article 24 prohibits the employment of children in any factory or mine or in any hazardous occupation. Article 39 (e) and (f) obligates the State to ensure that:

- ⇒ the health and strength of workers, men and women and the tender age of children are not abused;
- ⇒ citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;
- ⇒ children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of dignity and freedom;
- ⇒ child-hood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Discrimination against women from cradle to grave is done simply because of their sex. The biased attitude and outlook against women is a part of our social fabric. The girls are the worst sufferers in our country. According to UNICEF about 12 million girls are born in India every year. Of whom 25 per cent do not live to see their 15th birthday. Female infanticide is widely practised in many parts of rural India, parents are willing to incur the wrath of the law rather than let the girl child alive. Though India has progressive legislation like the Post-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 to prevent sex determination of the foetus with the aim of aborting the female, as is the pattern with most laws intended to uphold the rights of women, these are rarely implemented. Once it has been ascertained that the foetus is female, a variety of unimaginable barbaric methods are used to snuff out the life of the new born girl. Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuous decline female ratio in the population. The distortions regarding the unequal social arrangement for the girl child are a deep concern and a time bound intervention is imperative to improve our future.

The declaration of 1990 as the "Year of Girl Child" by South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation" (SAARC) provided an opportunity to the countries of South Asia to focus their attention on the situation of female child and to adopt some measures for their betterment. The socio-economic condition of girl child is an important index of measuring the economic well being and status of womenfolk in any nation. In India, like other developing countries, children form the most significant chunk of uncared population. For the vast majority of India's millions, a daughter is viewed as a liability, a social burden, educating whom is regarded a waste of finance, time and energy. With the result, female literacy remains at abysmally low levels. In a period of 90 years the female literacy has risen from 0.7 per cent in 1901 to 39.4 per cent in 1991.

The female children today remain most neglected in our society and discriminations are made against them. The society, suffering from such a 'son complex', therefore provide only a bleak future to the female child. The cultural values consider the women without a male child as inauspicious. The women have to suffer a lot for not being able to mother of a male child. Many quarters in rural fold always try to avoid such women. The mother in such an environment and culture, ill-treats her own daughter. The discrimination against girl child is the manifestation of the latent attitudes and social norms which is rooted in the ideology of culture. The negative attitude of society affects the child rearing practice. From the early childhood, the ideology of 'values' affects the socialisation of female child throughout the life cycle, which ultimately make female children understand their position in relation to men as daughters, mothers and wives as their subordinate. From the discriminatory behaviour the male child guesses and learns the means to take an advantage. Girls are not only discriminated in terms of access to opportunity compared to boys but also have to shoulder a lot of responsibilities at the household level. The vicious cycle of neglect, indifference attitude and conscious distribution against the girl from birth dictates her future and perpetuates her low status.

Furthermore, lack of awareness, illiteracy and early marriage make the life of girl child miserable. Poor health, low intake, illiteracy, low status and biased attitude of elders are generally associated with girls. Gender disparities have crept into Indian society since long due to socio-economic background of the people. The gap between gender disparity grew generation to generation with growing social taboos and it reflected on the development of girls and women.

DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF GIRL CHILDREN: The female children constituting about 17.83 per cent in the total population of our country, represent a most disadvantaged and neglected segment of our Society. The socio-cultural variables influence the rearing of girl children with biased dictation from their birth which confined their role upto household level. As per 1981 census, the population of female children in the age group of 0-14 years was 39.62 per cent of the total female population. The statewise figures reveals that the proportion of female children (0-14 years) was found highest 44.53 per cent in Andaman and Nicobar followed by 43.73 per cent in Sikkim and 43.08 per cent in Meghalaya (Table-1). It was lowest 34.87 per cent in Tamil Nadu followed by 34.88 per cent in Goa and 35.77 per cent in Chandigarh. However the share of female children in the total female population has declined from 39.62 per cent in 1981 to 37.4 per cent in 1991 as recorded by census. The declining rate of girls clearly highlights the biased attitude of society towards female, as a result the population of girls is decreasing year by year. Other reasons could be the recent trend in the preference of male child in the society and the increasing death rate of female population due to improper care of their illness and the killing of female foetus.

Not only the girl child is discriminated right from the beginning and forced to live on deprivations, ill health and exploitation, because of age old traditions, social customs and prejudices, but also the girl child is forced to do work in agriculture, industries, hotels and in other occupations. The census data also indicates that some

proportion of female children have been classified as workers and they are earning their livelihood by way of their labour. In India, about 2.9 per cent girl children were in the category of workers at their tender age (Table-1) as revealed by the census of 1981. The practice of taking work from the children was prevalent in all the states of our country with variations in their proportions. States like Sikkim and Andhra Pradesh were far ahead in this regard during 1981, where 7.3 per cent and 7.2 per cent of their total girl children were classified as main workers. Perhaps, the poor economic condition is the main factor behind this high rate of workers among children. It is very surprising to note that the proportion of girls as workers is increasing year by year, in spite of special provisions made in our Constitution and various efforts done by government to give proper education to all the children. According to 1991 census, more than 3.5 per cent of the female children (0-14 years) in India were counted as main workers as against 2.9 per cent in 1981. The analysis of the comparative data in this regard reveals the unsatisfactory state of affairs as far as 'education for all' and development programme of girl child is concerned. In states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan, the proportion of girl children was recorded more than 5 per cent who were classified as main workers (Table-1).

To protect the interest of girl child various acts have been passed and a number of development programmes have also been implemented in our country. The practice of child marriage, particularly in rural area, is widely recognised by the society. To curb on this practice, "Child Marriage Restraint Act" was passed in 1926 and further more, amendment has been made in 1976. It is known as 'Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act. In spite of this Act, the girls have not yet come out from this social evil and this misfortune is still associated with them. The reasons for child marriage in our society have to be sorted out from our socio-cultural environment. Customs and traditions as well as insecurity in the minds of the parents for the suitable match for both boys and girls, pressure of relatives, to get-rid-off from the responsibilities, illness of parents of the child, desire of grand parents to see the marriage ceremony of their grand children and other factors are responsible. The

census data in this regard also indicated that the child marriage is recognised in the society. In 1981, the proportion of girls (0-14 years) who were married, constituted 2.06 per cent of the total female child population in our country. Census 1991, pointed out that the magnitude and proportion of married female children has increased and this figure reached upto 4.5 per cent (Table-1). States like Bihar, M.P., Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are far ahead as far as child marriage is concerned. One can understand the status and development of girl children in these states where child marriage are practiced. The child marriage seems the starting point of vicious circle of misery, agony and drudgery among women. Rajasthan ranked first in the list of states where more than 13 per cent girls were married before attaining 14 years of age as census 1991 reveals. All the states have shown increasing trend in child marriage in 1991 over 1981. The census figures in this regard attract our special attention to chalk out appropriate measures to remove the social evil from our society.

Early child marriage and illiteracy make the life of girl child miserable. Education has universally been recognised as an important instrument for achieving not only economic development but also justice and harmony in the society. After Independence, a number of policies have been framed and several programmes have been implemented to increase the educational level of the female population. The Committee on Status of Women in India clearly stated that the women were denied basic needs, like health, nutrition and education. A number of schemes offering incentives to girls and their parents, like functional literacy programme, National Policy Resolution on Child, ICDS etc. are considered the child as gender free category. The Non-Functional System has also been introduced and it is extended to meet particularly the needs of girls who are unable to attend formal school. The government is committed to universalisation of primary education and education for all by 2000 AD. The census data regarding the number of school going female children presents disheartening picture. Only less than half population of the girl children were attending the schools as revealed by census 1991. Of the total school

age going girls, only 44.12 per cent were recorded as students by the last census (Table-1). A great variation is observed in the proportions of school attending girls in the states. The proportion of school going girls (5-14 years) was recorded highest 86.45 per cent in Kerala followed by 81.14 per cent in Goa, 73.43 per cent in Chandigarh and 74.09 per cent in Andaman Nicobar. On the other extreme, only 26.04 per cent girls (5-14 year) in Rajasthan were going to school during 1991 which was recorded lowest and it was followed by Bihar, U.P. and Dadar Nagar Haveli where the respective figures were 26.54 per cent, 28.97 per cent and 33.80 per cent (Table-1). The figure of 1991 census clearly highlights the level of success in our 40 years of planned efforts for economic development, particularly in sector like, education and manpower development.

When the population data are analysed according to different age groups, it is found that there has been differential in the proportions of population in these broad age-groups. Children (0-14 years) constitute 36.1 per cent in the total population of our country as revealed by census 1991. The adult population between 15-59 years was 57.8 per cent where as the population above 60 years was 6.2 per cent (Table-2). Variations are observed in the proportions of population belonging to different age-groups between male and female as well as between rural and urban area.

The proportion of male population in the age group of 0-14 was recorded higher (36.3 per cent) than the proportion of female population. However, the proportion of women above 60 years was higher (6.5 per cent) as compared to men. Sex wise variation in the proportion of population was registered with greater magnitude when the distribution of population is compared according to different agro-groups. The proportion of child population (0-14 years) was recorded substan-

TABLE 1 : MAIN FEATURES OF GIRL CHILDREN (0-14 YEARS) IN INDIA

State/Union Territory	Girl children (0-14) as percentage of female population		Percentage of girls population in the age group of 0-14 years (Girl Children)		% of Girl Students in the age group of 5-14 years		
			As main workers		As married		
	1981	1991	1981	1991	1981	1991	
India	39.62	37.4	2.9	3.5	2.06	4.5	44.12
Andhra Pradesh	38.60	35.7	7.2	7.4	2.01	3.5	41.43
Arunachal Pradesh	41.65	42.4	6.8	4.4	0.72	2.2	38.43
Bihar	41.17	40.8	1.6	1.9	3.03	7.2	26.54
Goa, Daman, Diu	34.88	28.4	1.9	1.2	0.16	0.8	81.14
Gujarat	38.40	35.5	2.2	3.6	0.65	2.2	56.42
Haryana	41.14	39.4	1.1	1.1	2.32	2.4	54.69
H.P.	39.42	35.1	4.3	3.6	0.48	1.0	67.83
Karnataka	40.04	36.3	4.9	6.0	1.29	2.5	51.79
Kerala	38.03	28.8	0.8	0.4	0.11	0.5	86.48
M.P.	41.36	39.2	5.3	5.7	4.01	8.5	38.69
Maharashtra	38.68	35.7	4.9	4.2	1.05	1.8	61.37
Manipur	39.48	35.6	3.7	3.0	0.20	1.3	55.28
Meghalaya	43.08	42.9	5.8	4.0	0.28	1.4	40.82
Mizoram	41.04	39.9	2.6	6.4	0.08	0.7	64.93
Nagaland	39.02	39.0	5.8	7.8	0.22	1.3	52.04
Orissa	39.92	35.8	2.4	3.5	0.30	1.3	45.50
Punjab	37.14	34.7	0.3	0.7	0.33	1.9	59.57
Rajasthan	42.63	40.6	2.7	5.1	5.65	13.2	26.04
Sikkim	43.73	41.4	7.3	3.7	0.21	1.4	59.85
Tamil Nadu	34.87	30.5	4.5	3.6	0.12	1.7	67.05
Tripura	39.90	38.7	1.4	1.2	0.41	1.2	51.69
U.P.	41.48	40.6	0.9	1.6	3.37	7.1	28.97
West Bengal	40.05	37.5	0.9	1.8	0.80	1.9	43.06
Andaman Nicobar	44.53	39.1	0.3	--	0.53	1.0	74.09
Chandigarh	35.77	33.7	0.5	0.4	0.24	1.0	77.43
Dadra, Nagar H.	42.26	39.4	5.6	0.4	0.54	1.7	33.80
Delhi	37.57	36.3	0.3	0.2	0.49	1.3	70.42
Lakshadweep	40.32	37.8	0.2	--	0.20	1.0	81.58
Pondicherry	36.43	31.1	0.9	0.7	0.07	0.8	78.62

Source: (i)

Census of India, 1981, India, Series 1, Part III-B (i), Economic Tables
 Census of India, Series 1 - India Part III-B, Series, Economic Tables
 Volume - 2.

(ii)

tially higher in rural area (39.6 per cent) as compared to urban area (33.0 per cent). However, the working force (between 15 to 59 years) constituted at higher proportion in urban area than the rural area (Table-2). Those who were above 60 years constituted 6.3 per cent in rural area and 5.7 per cent in urban area. The child population among males was at higher proportion as compared to the female child population.

TABLE 2 : PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN INDIA BY BROAD AGE GROUPS, SEX AND RESIDENCE, 1991

Residence	Sex	Broad Age-groups (years)					
		0-4	5-9	10-14	0-14	15-59	60 & above
Combined	Person	13.1	11.8	11.2	36.1	57.8	6.2
	Male	13.2	11.9	11.2	36.3	57.8	5.9
	Female	13.0	11.8	11.0	35.8	57.7	6.5
Rural	Person	13.6	12.0	11.3	36.9	56.8	6.3
	Male	13.8	12.1	11.4	37.3	56.7	6.0
	Female	13.5	11.9	11.1	36.6	56.8	6.6
Urban	Person	11.2	11.2	10.6	33.0	61.2	5.7
	Male	11.1	11.2	10.6	33.0	61.7	5.7
	Female	11.3	11.2	10.6	33.1	60.7	6.2

Note : Excludes Jammu and Kashmir
 Source : Sample Registration System, 1992, Office of Registrar General, India

INFANT MORTALITY AMONG GIRLS: Infant mortality rate in the country is an important deciding factor of quality of life. The high rate of infant mortality is a symptom of a poor quality of life and inadequate medical facilities. In India, infant mortality rate is more than three times the global average rate. As long as high levels of infant mortality persists, there is no meaning of development programmes. The

infant mortality rate is found higher among the females as compared to the males in almost half of the states in India (Table-3). The infant mortality rate was recorded 111

TABLE 3 : INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN MAJOR STATES IN INDIA, 1981, 1991

State	1981		1991	
	Male Child	Female Child	Male Child	Female Child
India	110	111	81	80
Andhra Pradesh	92	80	76	70
Assam	105	106	88	74
Bihar	112	124	68	71
Gujarat	114	118	70	67
Haryana	91	113	69	67
Karnataka	70	69	82	72
Kerala	44	31	17	16
Madhya Pradesh	147	137	116	119
Maharashtra	82	75	60	59
Orissa	139	130	126	123
Punjab	79	83	55	51
Rajasthan	107	109	77	80
Tamil Nadu	93	89	60	54
Uttar Pradesh	146	156	95	100
West Bengal	94	89	72	69

Source: Statistics on Children in India

among girls and 110 among boys during 1981 Census. Infant Mortality in Uttar Pradesh has been significantly higher in comparison with other states as well as country as a whole (Table-3). Early marriage, short interval between births, lack of adequate medical facilities, higher fertility rate, poverty, illiteracy, unhealthy environment and certain cultural practices have been found associated with higher infant mortality. Kerala always ranked first as far as lowest level of infant mortality is concerned. Early death of children is also associated with the level of literacy among the residents. At present state Orissa has the highest infant mortality rate both among male as well as female as recorded by Census 1991 and the infant mortality rate was 123 among females and 126 among males. This state is followed by Madhya

Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh where infant mortality rate in girls was 119 and 100 respectively. However, the last Census data revealed that there has been declining trend in infant mortality in our country. The infant mortality in females was found lowest in Kerala registering 31 in 1981 and 16 in 1991 which was followed by Punjab, Gujarat and Haryana (Table-3).

TABLE 4: STATE-WISE ESTIMATED INFANT MORTALITY RATES BY RESIDENCE IN INDIA

	Combined			Rural			Urban		
	Per- son	Male	Fe- male	Per- son	Male	Fe- male	Per- son	Male	Fe- male
India*	79	79	80	85	84	86	53	54	52
Andhra Pradesh	71	73	68	78	80	75	42	43	40
Assam	82	86	78	83	90	79	50	40	61
Bihar	73	71	74	74	72	77	49	53	44
Gujarat	67	66	69	72	70	74	53	51	55
Haryana	75	73	78	79	78	80	56	47	67
Himachal Pradesh	67	67	66	69	70	67	32	22	45
Karnataka	73	77	67	82	89	75	41	40	43
Kerala	17	21	12	17	22	12	13	14	12
M.P.	104	109	98	109	115	102	74	73	75
Maharashtra	59	61	57	67	68	67	40	45	34
Orissa	115	114	116	118	117	118	80	76	84
Punjab	56	54	60	61	56	68	41	46	34
Rajasthan	90	88	92	94	93	95	65	58	75
Tamil Nadu	58	58	59	66	65	68	42	45	38
Uttar Pradesh	98	92	105	102	94	110	78	79	77
West Bengal	65	67	62	71	74	67	38	34	41

* Excludes Jammu and Kashmir

Source: Statistics on Children in India, Pocket Book 1995

National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development.

When we look the data on infant mortality in rural and urban area separately, we find that the infant mortality rate has always been significantly higher in rural area as compared to urban area. Taking India as a whole, the female infant mortality is recorded 86 in rural area as against 52 in urban area (Table-4). This clearly highlights that the medical facilities in rural areas are inadequate and very poor. The factors, such as inadequate medical facilities, lack of maternity centres, unqualified mid-wives, unhygienic conditions, lack of awareness and motivation, poverty and

illiteracy are responsible for such infant mortality rate at a higher level in countryside. Infant mortality rate in females is found lowest in Kerala which is about four times less than the national average (Table-4). This rate is equal in urban as well as rural area of the state. In Rural area, Orissa ranked first which has highest rate of female infant mortality in the country, where as in urban sector, this rate is highest in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The infant mortality rates are recorded higher than the national average in 25 per cent states. However, in urban area, about 44 per cent states have experienced higher rate of female infant mortality than the national average (Table-4).

MORTALITY IN DIFFERENT AGE-GROUPS: Higher female mortality can be linked to the neglect of females as infant, as children, as adolescents, as wives and as mothers. Generally, distribution of food, health care, education, recreation, pocket expenses and leisure time are highly attuned to favour males. The evidence of gender differences in mortality in India is unambiguous; female mortality exceeds male mortality during early childhood in large part of India. Such excesses in female mortality are more likely to occur by age 4 years. By and large the female mortality rate has always been higher as compared to mortality in males in all the age-groups of the children. In 1981, the female mortality rate was recorded 20.9 in urban areas as against in 48 in rural area in the age group of 0-4 years (Table-5). The gap in mortality rate between boys and girls was of a higher magnitude in rural area as compared to urban area. As we have already mentioned that due to inadequate medical facilities and lack of infrastructural facilities, the children particularly the girls suffer from many diseases in rural areas. The difference between mortality in females and males is not recorded significant in the age group of 10-14 years.

Data on the age-specific death rate upto the age of 14 years reveals that the mortality rates in all age-groups have substantially declined in 1991 over 1981 (Table-5). However, the variation in the mortality rates between boys and girls is

recorded greater in rural area than the urban area. This trend indicates that the discrimination against girl child is of lower level in urban on the one hand and the availability of better medical and health facilities on other.

TABLE 5: AGE-SPECIFIC DEATH RATE UPTO THE AGE OF 14 YEARS BY RESIDENCE AND SEX IN INDIA, 1981 AND 1991

Year	Rural/ Urban/ Total	Age Groups (years)								
		0 - 4			5 - 9			10 - 14		
		Male	Fe-male	Person	Male	Fe-male	Person	Male	Fe-male	Person
1981	Rural	43.1	48.0	45.5	4.1	5.0	4.6	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Urban	20.0	20.9	20.4	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.5
	TOTAL	39.2	43.3	41.2	3.7	4.4	4.0	1.8	1.7	1.7
1991	Rural	28.1	30.2	29.1	2.8	3.2	3.0	1.5	1.8	1.6
	Urban	15.4	16.6	16.0	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.1	0.9	1.0
	TOTAL	25.6	27.5	26.5	2.6	2.9	2.7	1.4	1.6	1.5

Source : Sample Registration System, 1981 and 1991
Office of the Registrar General, India

The age specific death rate in children upto the age of 14 years in different states of country does not show any particular trend. In some states, the death rate in girls is recorded higher than boys and in some states it is higher in boys than girls. However, the national level, the average mortality rate is higher among females than the males in all categories of age groups (Table-6). In half of the states, the female mortality rates are higher than the male mortality rates in the age group of 0-4 years. A similar trend is also recorded in about 36 per cent states in the age group 5-14 years. Death rate in female children at early age (0-4 years) is registered highest in M.P. (44.4) followed by Orissa (38.7) and U.P. (38.4) in 1991. However, in the age group 5-14 years, the mortality rate in girls is found highest in Assam (4.5) and

lowest in Kerala (0.3) (Table-6). Statewise figures in this regard show a considerable variation in the mortality rate between one state to other and the variation is of a great magnitude in the early years of age.

TABLE 6 : STATE-WISE AGE SPECIFIC DEATH RATE UPTO THE AGE OF 14 YEARS IN INDIA 1991

STATE	Age-group (years)			
	0 - 4		5 - 14	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
India	25.9	27.2	2.0	2.2
Andhra Pradesh	24.8	17.6	1.6	1.4
Assam	34.4	30.4	3.1	4.5
Bihar	20.9	24.8	2.5	2.2
Gujarat	23.1	23.5	1.2	1.1
Haryana	22.3	23.8	1.5	1.2
Karnataka	24.4	22.8	1.6	1.6
Kerala	5.2	3.4	0.5	0.3
Madhya Pradesh	44.6	44.4	3.3	3.4
Maharashtra	15.9	16.7	1.0	1.4
Orissa	39.3	38.7	2.8	2.7
Punjab	15.1	19.0	1.4	1.5
Rajasthan	28.5	23.7	2.5	1.5
Tamil Nadu	14.4	17.9	1.7	1.9
Uttar Pradesh	33.1	38.4	2.2	2.6
West Bengal	20.4	20.8	1.9	1.9

Source: *Sample Registration System, 1991*
Office of the Registrar General, India

PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS:

In developing countries the women are generally associated with low level of education. Illiteracy has been one of the main causes of backwardness in our country. The female literacy in India, though, it has come up to 39.3 per cent in 1991 from 0.7 per cent in 1901, to 7.9 per cent in 1951 to 24.3 per cent in 1981, it is still unacceptably low. However, top priority has been given to education in each Five

Year Plan. Due to one reason or other, the participation of female population in education process has been very low in our country, in spite of improvements in the infrastructure of education. It is recognised that education is an important instrument for bringing structural changes in the society. Human resource and economic development is guided by the level and quality of education in the population.

ENROLMENT RATE AMONG GIRLS: Girls are found to be lagging behind boys at every stage of education. Educational participation of girls in terms of percentage of girls in the total number of students is found declining with every successive higher level.

Of the 100 million children world-wide between the ages of 6 to 11 who do not attend schools, 70 per cent are girls. Girls suffer most as far as education is concerned in all the developing countries. In our country the enrolment rate of girls in primary schools was recorded 66.2 per cent in 1981 and 88.6 per cent in 1991. The analysis of statewise data regarding enrolment rates reveals that there have been wide variations in enrolment rates between male and female children as well as between one state and another. The enrolment rates in girls in primary level of education are lower than the boys in all the states and union territories. However, Delhi is the only state where the enrolment rate of girls in primary level of education is recorded higher than boys (Table-7). The enrolment rate of girls is recorded lowest 54.4 per cent in Bihar and it is highest 140.8 per cent in Tamil Nadu. The gap in enrolment rates between boys and girls is recorded most wide in Rajasthan followed by U.P. and J & K (Table-7). The gap of this magnitude poses a serious question to the concerned governments and their policies.

The enrolment trend highlights that as the level of education increases the enrolment rate, particularly in girls goes down. In the middle level of education, the participation of girls in education is registered lower than in the primary level of

TABLE 7 : ENROLMENT RATIO AT PRIMARY AND MIDDLE LEVEL OF EDUCATION BY SEX
IN STATES/UNION TERRITORIES, 1993-94

State/Union Territory	Classes I-V (6 - 11 years)			Classes VI - VIII (11 - 14 years)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Andhra Pradesh	116.4	100.1	108.4	73.9	53.1	63.7
Arunachal Pradesh	132.5	99.2	115.8	62.5	46.3	54.5
Assam	134.4	125.3	130.0	89.3	65.5	77.7
Bihar	95.9	54.4	76.1	47.4	21.0	34.7
Goa	102.3	93.7	98.0	104.3	88.6	96.4
Gujarat	131.4	106.0	119.1	82.8	55.5	70.9
Haryana	109.7	95.4	102.8	81.8	59.2	70.9
Himachal Pradesh	126.8	111.5	119.1	124.4	97.9	111.2
J & K	104.3	72.6	88.8	79.7	48.8	64.7
Karnataka	124.3	115.2	119.9	72.4	57.2	65.0
Kerala	103.8	100.8	102.3	108.3	105.7	107.0
M.P.	116.7	91.3	104.5	82.5	50.0	66.9
Maharashtra	123.6	115.0	119.4	89.0	71.9	80.7
Manipur	100.3	96.0	98.2	77.9	68.4	73.2
Meghalaya	77.8	71.8	74.8	42.7	38.3	40.5
Nagaland	110.9	101.6	106.3	70.1	68.9	69.5
Orissa	116.8	77.6	96.8	67.8	63.4	57.0
Punjab	92.9	88.1	90.6	71.8	63.4	67.8
Rajasthan	119.5	60.9	91.0	76.8	28.9	53.9
Tamil Nadu	149.0	140.8	145.0	111.3	91.0	101.4
U.P.	103.9	72.8	89.3	72.2	35.4	55.0
West Bengal	124.7	123.0	123.9	98.2	89.1	93.8
Chandigarh	65.5	64.0	64.8	62.2	63.3	62.7
Delhi	86.3	87.4	86.8	81.6	78.0	79.9

Source: Annual Report, 1994-95, Part-I, Department of Education, Govt. of India,
Ministry of Human Resource, New Delhi.

education. A marked variation is found in enrolment rate in class VI to VIII among the states and it varies from 21.0 per cent in Bihar to 105.7 per cent in Kerala (Table-7). In the middle level of education (11-14 years) the enrolment in girls is recorded higher than the boys in Chandigarh. The gap in enrolment rates between boys and girls is found wider in middle level of schooling than the primary level. This trend highlights that enrolment rate in girls is decreasing with the increase of educational level. The reasons for declining the enrolment rate in girls could be lack of motivation, poverty, non-availability of girl schools, long distance of schools and the biased attitude of

parents towards the female children. The gap in enrolment rate between boys and girls in middle level education is recorded largest in Rajasthan. This gap is registered lowest in Nagaland followed by Kerala (Table-7).

The analysis of statewise data on enrolment rates of girls students of primary and middle level of education and the gap in enrolment rates between boys and girls reveal the fact that the enrolment rates of girls are far behind and the gap in enrolment rates between boys and girls is larger in those states which are economically backward.

DROP-OUT IN GIRL STUDENTS: The education process in our country suffers from the severe rate of drop-out in the students, particularly in the female students. Drop-out in the students is not only misuse of resources but also a curse in the way of permanent literacy programme. Though there has been some improvement in the enrolment rates among girls in our country. However, it is beset with the problem of high drop-out rates. Unless there is effective schooling for 5 years, permanent literacy cannot be achieved in our country.

The drop-out rate for primary and middle school children continues to be alarming. The Human Resource Development Ministry's latest annual report (1998-99) states that 38.23 per cent of boys and 41.34 per cent of girls leave the school system before reaching the class Five stage.

By the time the survivors of the primary stage reach class eight, more than half (54.14%) drop-out. Of them 50.72 per cent are boys and 58.61 per cent are girls. Less than a third clear secondary school . That is because 67.65 per cent of the boys and 72.67 per cent of girls leave the system. While Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Pondichery and Kerala have in recent years actually solved the drop-out rate problem. Lakshadweep and Goa are steadily improving their performance. , The national

performance is brought down by states like Bihar - which leads in every respect with almost 60 per cent leaving school at some stage or other between class one and ten - Orissa the North Eastern States, U.P. and West Bengal.

Curiously, states reporting a high incidence of drop-outs also have the largest number of Teachers. Kerala with the highest density in the country had only 45899 teachers in the primary stage in 1997-98. This clearly upholds the validity of the theory that opening schools and recruiting more teachers achieve little.

During 1997-98, the number of recognised primary schools in India was 610763. There are also 185506 middle and 107100 higher secondary schools. The annual report also stated that there were 7199 general colleges, 2075 professional institutes and 229 universities.

The influence of social, economic and cultural factors is seen in the high drop-out rates. The education participation of girls in terms of percentage of girls in the total number of students is found declining with every successive higher level. Between rural and urban girls, the former have been found to be at disadvantage. The parents initially get their daughters enrolled in the schools but the household chores prevent them from attending classes regularly and may even drop-out. In order to improve this situation, the education and motivation is required among the parents to give equal importance to girl's education. The solution to reducing the drop-out rate may be found in providing a more attractive curriculum, facilities of games and other items of infrastructure in the schools. According to the finding of a survey which was placed before the Fourth International Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995, that some 81 million girls (49 million more than boys) have no access to primary education. As a result uneducated girls continue to swell the ranks of the world's one billion illiterate adults, two-thirds of whom are women.

TABLE 8 : DROP-OUT RATES AT PRIMARY AND MIDDLE STAGE BY SEX IN STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, 1993-94

State/Union Territory	Classes I-V (6 - 11 years)			Classes VI - VIII (11 - 14 years)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Andhra Pradesh	42.48	41.78	42.18	59.94	66.48	62.85
Arunachal Pradesh	60.09	61.09	60.52	69.62	67.45	68.72
Assam	38.85	39.55	39.05	63.81	71.80	67.55
Bihar	68.85	66.20	63.36	76.70	82.73	78.74
Goa	-7.95	3.09	-2.57	8.57	16.34	12.28
Gujarat	42.05	51.39	46.25	54.65	66.46	59.97
Haryana	1.60	6.81	3.93	17.57	32.05	29.91
Himachal Pradesh	24.64	28.16	26.28	13.11	27.39	19.74
J & K	53.12	42.35	48.66	45.25	72.73	56.46
Karnataka	37.50	44.42	40.78	56.83	69.73	62.98
Kerala	-5.35	-3.05	-4.23	1.24	0.57	0.91
M.P.	23.43	34.96	28.36	38.12	54.15	44.68
Maharashtra	24.10	31.63	27.62	44.02	56.30	49.79
Manipur	68.02	68.53	68.26	72.41	72.11	72.34
Meghalaya	29.96	34.43	32.06	58.14	57.11	57.65
Nagaland	37.57	24.13	31.65	36.71	39.58	38.13
Orissa	52.78	52.23	52.54	62.64	59.04	61.21
Punjab	20.69	22.94	21.74	36.15	42.78	39.22
Rajasthan	45.70	53.63	48.93	62.34	72.34	65.43
Tamil Nadu	16.39	18.35	17.30	32.15	41.20	36.34
U.P.	19.86	20.08	19.94	31.99	47.63	37.51
West Bengal	36.17	45.76	40.43	48.82	43.96	46.67
Chandigarh	-20.31	-9.04	-14.90	-5.96	-12.79	-9.09
Delhi	19.25	28.83	25.74	19.89	31.24	25.35

Source: Annual Report 1994-95, Part-I, Department of Education, 1995, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi p.219, 220.

Looking at the data on the drop-out rates in primary level of education in different states, it appears that the drop-out rates are higher in the girls students in most of the states. State like; Andhra Pradesh Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland and Orissa the drop-out rates in boys are recorded slightly higher compared to girls (Table-8). In primary level, the drop out rate in girls is registered highest 68.53 per cent in Manipur followed by 66.20 per cent in Bihar and 61.09 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh. However drop-out rates in girls are recorded negative in Kerala and Chandigarh, which are healthy signs as far as participation of girls in education is concerned.

concerned. The gap in drop-out rates between boys and girls are seen wider in middle classes compared to the primary level of education (Table-8). The drop-out rates in middle standard of education are considerably higher than that of primary level in both boys and girls. In 1993-94 the drop-out rate was recorded highest 82.73 per cent in Bihar followed by 72.73 per cent in J. & K. and 72.34 per cent in Rajasthan in middle level schooling. Notable variations in the drop-out rates are observed in different states in primary as well as middle level education which reveals regional imbalances of severe nature in our country. The pattern of drop-out in the educational process is a black spot in our total literacy mission programme.

GIRL CHILD WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYMENT PATTERN:

In India, like other developing countries, children form the most significant chunk of uncared population. A large number of children below the age of 14 years have to work in some kind of economic gainful activity to earn money. These children are called the child labour which comprises of both male and female child. Child labour includes all those aged 14 years or below who are engaged in some productive work, whether paid or not, within a family or outside. Government of India made many Acts to abolish child labour practice. The Child Labour Abolition Act has also been passed to completely ban child labour. However, a large number of children are working as child labour in various hazardous establishment in our country. The phenomenon of large number of female child workers in India clearly indicates the social and economic backwardness of our country. According to 1991 census the total number of girl children (0-14 years) in India was 15.1 crore out of which 3.5 per cent were female child labour. Several economic and social factors are responsible for the prevalence of large scale female child workers in India. Poverty is probably the most important cause for the prevalence of child labour specially female child labour in India. Most of the female child labour belong to poor families who have to work to supplement their family income. In many poor families, traditionally education is not considered as necessary for the females.

For them, educating a girl child means indirect loss of family income and non-availability of girl for household works and looking after younger children and aged persons. Old tradition, social customs and prejudices are also responsible for this injustice to female children working as labourers.

The distribution of female child labour by three broad sectors of the economy indicates that the primary sector which includes the first three categories, viz., cultivators, agricultural labourer and livestock, fishing, forestry etc. employ about 88 per cent of the total female child workers. In secondary and tertiary sectors the percentages of female child workers are 8.5 and 3.5 respectively. Due to mass scale poverty and illiteracy in rural areas, the proportion of female child workers are at a larger proportion. The incidence of child labour has been measured in terms of labour participation ratio of female child workers to total number of female children. The all India average of the incidence of female child labour is 3.5 per cent (Tabale-1). However, there are large interstate variations in such ratios. It varies from 7.8 per cent in Nagaland to 0.2 per cent in Delhi. A negative correlation between the incidence of female child labour and the level of literacy is found in the states.

DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN (AGE 5-9 AND 10-14 YEARS) BY PRINCIPAL USUAL ACTIVITY STATUS:

The National Sample Survey Organisation (1987-88) made three broad categories of Children (5-14 years) on the basis of principal usual activity status. The categories are working, not working but sought work and not in labour force. The proportion of male children in labour force is recorded slightly higher than the female children in all the age groups. About 0.6 per cent female children in the age group 5-9 years were found employed in the rural areas. However, this proportion was 0.3 in urban areas. The proportion of female children (10-14 years) was 12.6 per cent in rural areas who were either self employed or salaried employees or casual labourers in public works

and other type of work. Whereas this figure is 4.5 per cent in urban area (Table-9). The female children searching gainful employment constituted about 0.4 per cent in rural area and 0.2 per cent in urban area. The children not in labour force comprises of school going, attending domestic duties only, engaged in household work, disabled, beggars and others. NSS data on school going children reveals that there is a considerable variation in the proportions of school going children in males and females. Similarly a marked variation is also observed in school attending female children residing in rural and urban areas. In the age group 5-9 years, 23.5 per cent female children were attending school in rural area whereas, the proportion of such children was 67.7 per cent in urban area. Only 12.3 per cent children in female population was recorded as students in 10-14 years age-group in rural area as against 72.4 per cent in urban area. The gap in the proportions of school going girls between rural and urban area presents an alarming picture about the interstate variations in educational pattern. These data suggest a clear cut direction to the authorities about the priority areas of planning in their respective states.

A sizeable proportion of female children remain engaged in performing the household work and other domestic activities. They either help to their parents in their own households in day-to-day activities or working in other households without any kinds of remuneration. The proportion of such girls in the age group of 10-14 years is recorded 22.3 per cent in rural areas and 12.4 per cent in urban area (Table-9). The female children in rural households generally share the household activities, such as, looking after small children and aged persons, cleaning, sweeping, cooking, washing, grinding, bringing water and fuelwood, grazing the cattle and helping in agricultural fields. Due to poverty, lack of facilities, motivation, awareness, the parents in the poor families engage their children, particularly the girls in household chores and do not send them to schools as a result the illiteracy rate among girls is not showing any encouraging trend in our country. The biased

TABLE 9 : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN (AGE 5-9 AND 10-14 YEAR) BY PRINCIPAL USUAL ACTIVITY STATUS IN INDIA, 1987-88

Usual Activity Status (Principal)	RURAL				URBAN			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	5-9	10-14	5-9	10-14	5-9	10-14	5-9	10-14
A. WORKING (OR EMPLOYED):								
(1) Worked (Self-employed in household enterprises	0.5	9.0	0.4	7.2	0.3	3.1	0.2	2.0
(2) Worked as wage/salaries employee'	0.1	1.6	--	0.5	0.1	2.3	0.1	1.2
(3) Worked as casual labourer in public works	--	0.1	--	0.1	--	--	--	--
(4) Worked as casual labour in other type of work	0.1	3.8	0.1	4.8	0.1	1.9	0.1	1.3
TOTAL EMPLOYED	0.7	14.7	0.6	12.6	0.5	7.3	0.4	4.5
B. NOT WORKING BUT SOUGHT WORK:								
--	--	0.5	--	0.4	--	0.8	--	0.2
C. NEITHER WORKING NOR AVAILABLE FOR WORK:								
(1) Attended educational Institutions	27.6	67.0	23.5	12.3	72.6	81.3	67.7	72.4
(2) Attended domestic duties only	--	0.8	0.5	11.4	0.2	0.6	0.6	9.5
(3) Attended domestic duties free and was also engaged in household work	0.1	1.1	0.5	10.9	0.1	0.2	0.1	2.9
(4) Not able to work due to disabilities	--	0.2	--	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
(5) Beggars etc.	--	0.1	--	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
(6) Others	71.6	15.8	74.9	22.2	26.5	9.6	31.1	10.3
Total not in Labour Force	99.3	85.0	99.4	87.0	99.5	91.9	99.6	95.3
TOTAL (A + B + C)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics on Children in India, Pocket Book, 1995
National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, Page 202, 203

attitude and discrimination against girl child in the society is itself highlighted by the comparative figures related to the proportions of boys and girls working in household and domestic work. The reasons attributed to it are, area specific social customs, traditions and poverty of the people. In tribal and backward area, education is not considered as an essential part of life particularly for girls. Domestic duties, like collecting of fuel, fetching of water, looking after the small children and aged, grazing the cattle, etc. are assigned to the female children.

LABOUR FORCE OF THE GIRL CHILD AS PER CURRENT STATUS:

CURRENT STATUS: As per current status, non-agricultural sector is the major source of employment for child labourforce. The NSS data (45th round) regarding the distribution of labour force as per current weekly status in different employment categories among female children (10-14 years) reveals that 80.0 per cent of them are engaged in non-agricultural sector either as self employed or regular or casual workers. Only 20.0 per cent of the labourforce is working in agriculture sector (Table-10). In the age-group of 5-9 years, about 72 per cent of the female child labourforce is employed in non-agricultural sector. The current status of child labour force indicates that there is not a single girl who is seeking job in the age group of 10-14 years. However, female children in the age group of 5-9 years are categories as unemployed and they constitute about 14.3 per cent of the labourforce. Those who are self-employed either in agricultural or non-agricultural sector constitute about 64.5 per cent in total labourforce of girls in the age-group of 10-14 years. The proportion of casual workers is recorded higher in male children as compared to female children.

Historically, child workers have existed since time immorial. Children have been helping and working with their parents and with their elders. The work performed by children working as child labour is usually classified as (a) paid, or (b) unpaid. Wage employment to children is offered in most cases by relatively small

TABLE 10: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR FORCE AS PER CURRENT WEEKLY STATUS IN DIFFERENT EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES IN AGE GROUP 5-9 AND 10-14 YEARS IN 1989-90

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES	Male		Female	
	5-9	10-14	5-9	10-14
A. Self-employed Persons				
(a) Agriculture	9.1	6.3	28.6	15.6
(b) Non-Agriculture	36.4	48.4	28.6	48.9
B. Regular-Salaried Workers				
(a) Agriculture	--	--	--	--
(b) Non-Agriculture	--	16.8	14.3	17.8
C. Casual Workers				
(a) Agriculture	--	2.1	--	4.4
(b) Non-Agriculture	45.4	20.0	14.3	13.3
D. Unemployed Persons	9.1	6.0	14.3	--

Source: Sarvekshana (45th Round of N.S.S.)

industrial units, almost located in the unorganised sector. The main features of child workers are as (i) the number of children working as child labour is growing (ii) the bulk of child labour is employed in unorganised sector, and (iii) children are made to work even in hazardous occupations. In agriculture sector, the girl workers are helping their parents in agricultural operations or working as agricultural labour. In our country, a sizeable number of female child workers are employed in non-agricultural sector. Some of the hazardous occupations in which female child labour is prevalent include the bidi industry, carpet weaving, cement industry, cloth printing, dying, weaving, manufacturing of matches, explosives and fire works, soap industry, mica cutting and splitting, shellac manufacturing, tanning, printing press wool-cleaning, building and construction industry.